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SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

Name Arnold Arehart (psydo) Date 6/2/78 Time 2:00 pm

Address Mexico City Place American Embassy, Mexico

Interview:

Mr. Arehart was interviewed by HSCA Staff members Gary Cornwell, Dan Hardway, Edwin Lopez, and Harold Leap. He was shown a copy of the CIA omnibus release letter and stated that he understood that it released him of any secrecy agreement he may have signed while employed by the CIA.

Mr. Arehart was assigned to Mexico City as a technician in 1960. Mr. Arehart worked continuously on one project until his retirement after Phillip Agee's revelations compromised his project. Mr. Arehart worked outside the U.S. Embassy under deep cover. He worked inside of the base that monitored and taped the telephones that were subject to the CIA/Mexican liaison tapping operation. His specific duty was to do all technical work required in the base and to keep the equipment in working order.

Mr. Arehart stated that the base monitored 30 telephones, i.e., there were thirty incoming lines and thirty tape machines to record the conversations. He stated that he was not sure where the taps were placed or how many taps were in what locations. Mr. Arehart was in contact, routinely, with Anne Goodpasture and Win Scott. He said that there was

Interviewer Signature

Typed Signature ~~dan hardway~~ (more)

Date transcribed 6/19/78

By: Form #4-A

counterpart to him in the base in that he represented the Americans and his counterpart represented the Mexicans. He said that the counterpart's name was fnu Coseo. Coseo's father was the Mexican official in charge of the Mexican's involvement in the operations. Mr. Arehart was not at all clear about the role of Coseo Sr.

The tapeing equipment was impulse activated in that a call coming into or going out of the tapped phone would automatically activate the recorders.

Mr. Arehart said that he was the only American in the base. He said that there were 6 to 8 Mexicans who monitored the conversations and transcribed the tapes. As the Mexicans monitored the conversations they would make summaries of the important conversations. It was up to the monitors to decide which conversations were important enough to summarize. Arehart was not aware of any instruction that was provided the Mexican monitors on which conversations should be deemed important. In addition to the summaries, the tapes from the Cuban taps and the Spanish language portions of the tapes from the Soviet taps were transcribed in the base. Arehart turned the summaries, Cuban transcripts, Russian (Spanish) transcripts, and the Russian tapes, over to his contact. He stated that his routine contact was Anne Goodpasture and that he just assumed that she was the case officer for the project even though he claims that he received his orders directly from Win Scott by telephone. Summaries were always delivered very early in the morning the day after a conversation occured. The transcripts were literal transcriptions. Mr. Arehart said that sometimes, if the Mexican monitors felt something was really important, tapes and transcripts were passed immediately

to Ms. Goodpasture.

Mr. Arehart stated that he believed that the summaries would have been maintained at the station, probably in a chronological file.

Mr. Arehart was questioned extensively about the retention and erasure of tapes used in the listening post. Mr. Arehart said that the tapes produced at the base would fall into three catagories:

1) tapes produced by taps on Cuban related phones;
2) tapes produced by taps on Soviet related phones;
3) tapes produced by taps on other phones such as Mexican radicals, politicians, etc.

Mr. Arehart said that the tapes produced by the Cuban taps were maintained in the listening post. He said that he had a special rack for these tapes in his workshop which was on the floor above the room in which the listening post was situated. This rack had thirty slots in it. The tapes from each day's production went into a seperate slot with the oldest tapes going back into use in the monitor room, i.e. the tapes from the Cuban tapes were held for thirty days before reuse. Mr. Arehart said that he routinely got requests for delivery of specific Cuban tapes from Ann Goodpasture but that the tapes were not routinely given to her unless she asked for them.

Mr. Arehart said that the Russian tapes were routinely given to Ms. Goodpasture so that she could get them to the Russian transcribers. He said that not all of these tapes were returned to him. He said that he knew this because his supply of tapes for the Russian taps kept dwindling. He assumes, while claiming no actual knowledge, that tapes were routinely retained by either the Russian translator or someone in the Station. He does not know which because he claims to have no

knowledge about what happened to the tapes after they left his possession and before they were returned to him. He said that the tapes were returned to him already erased and ready for use.

Tapes from the third catagory were not held for very long and were routinely re-used, usually within a day or so after they were taped.

Mr. Arehart said that he was not aware of any other surveillance operations in Mexico City. He said that he assumed that there was photographic surveillance since the Agency would not be fulfilling their obligations if they did not have it. Mr. Arehart said that there was a process whereby the station could be notified that an interesting individual, or an individual whom the station was interested in, was at, or was going to be at, one of the Embassies. Mr. Arehart said that in such a situation the monitor would bring it to his attention and he would then call Ms. Goodpasture and alert her. Mr. Arehart stated that his second duty at the base was to alert the station to anything important.

Mr. Arehart said that he did not know what happened to the Soviet tapes. He did say that for a short time he was responsible for delivering the tapes to Boris Tarasoff in order to expedite the process. Mr. Arehart said that he did remember a man named "Rudy" but he did not remember what he did or what he looked like.

Mr Arehart said that it was possible that one of the Mexican agents transcribed English language conversations. He said that these convesations (tapes) were usually sent to the Embassy. He was not at all certain on these points. He said that on English conversations that

he remembers that a Mexican would often come to the second floor and ask him to come and listen to the conversation.

Mr. Arehart was questioned about whether there was a process whereby transcription of important conversations in English or Russian could be expedited. He explained that there would not be such a process for a Russian conversation since they could not judge the importance of the conversation due to the fact that no one in the base understood Russian. He said that there was such a procedure for English conversations. He siad that after listening to the conversation and deeming it important he would Mark the tape "Urgent" and would put it in a box and deliver it.

Mr. Arehart said that when he worked with Tarasoff that he would pick up the tapes to reuse as well as drop them off for transcription. He said that he did not pick up the transcripts from Tarasoff and has no idea about what happened to them. Mr. Arehart said that he did not receive all of the tapes back and just assumed that they had been retained because of interest in the conversations contained on them. He said this was routine. After getting the tapes back, either from Tarasoff or Goodpasture depending on the time period, he would put them back into the working order. The tapes were not retained after they were returned to the base.

Mr Arehart said that the tape machines were activated at approximately 7:00 a.m. They were turned off at 11:00 p.m.

Mr. Arehart said that the Russian tapes were taken off the machines on a daily basis for delivery to Goodpasture or Tarasoff. The Cuban tapes were left on the machines until the reel was full. They were then removed and transcribed.

Mr. Arehart said that Lee Harvey Oswald never came to his attention prior to the assassination. He does not know whether or not he was ever asked to retain, or turn over to the station, any tape containing Oswald's voice. He explained that such requests would be made to him by giving him the tape number and that he never knew what was on any particular tape that was requested from him. He has never heard of a tape of Oswald existing nor has he heard that such tapes did not exist; he has simply never discussed it.

Mr. Arehart stated that there was a file of transcripts maintained at the base of the transcripts that were produced at the base. He remembered that after the assassination someone requested that those files be checked. Mr. Arehart said that he was not certain but thought that they had located one short conversation either by or about Oswald. Mr. Arehart could not remember the details of that conversation. He stated that he does not know what happened to the files that were maintained at the base station after his retirement.

Mr. Arehart said that we were the first people to ever talk to him about these events. He said that he has never talked to anyone from the CIA about these things. He confirmed that he had never been contacted by anyone from the IG staff in regards to the assassination or Lee Harvey Oswald's trip to Mexico. Mr. Arehart said that he had never discussed the case with anyone in the Mexico CIA station, either at the time or since then.

Mr. Arehart said that he did not get along with Anne Goodpasture. He said that she was a "show must go on type" that would get angry if she tried to contact him and he happened to be out to

Mr. Arehart said that Ann was so efficient that it was often very irratating. He said that Win Scott was also very efficient.

Mr. Arehart said that he believed that the listening post used Ampex 701's to tape the conversations they intercepted. He said that the calls were monitored by the three or four of the employees as they came in. These employees prepared the log sheets and the resumen (summary). The reels were then given to the transcribers who fixed the times and reel footage cite numbers to the specific conversations on the transcripts. Mr. Arehart said that the times on the transcripts would be accurate, usually, within 15 minutes more or less.

Mr. Arehart was shown transcripts from the Soviet and Cuban Embassy taps. These transcripts were in the Spanish language. He identified them as transcripts produced in the base.

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